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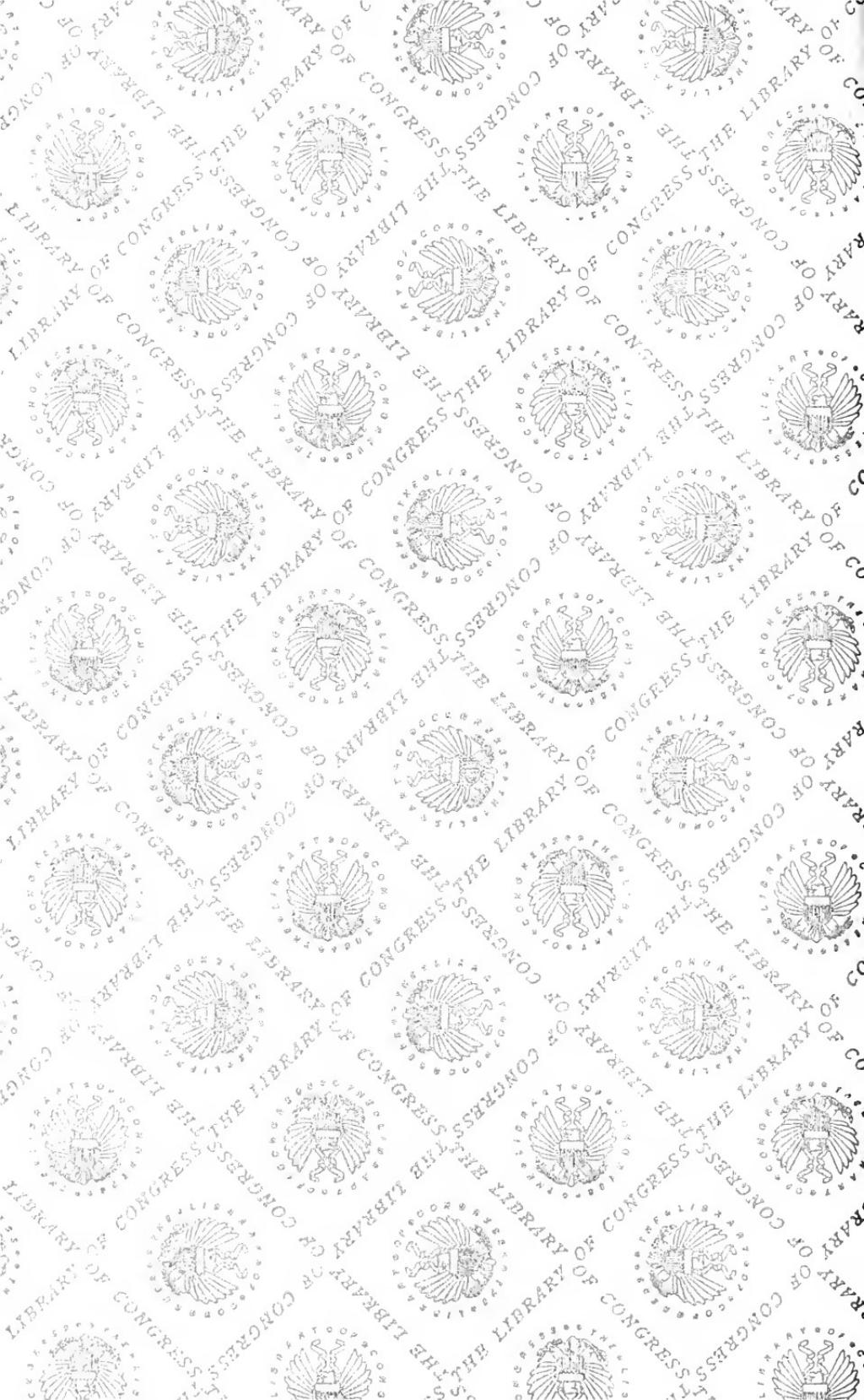
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# LETTER FROM ROBERT DALE OWEN.

*To the Editor of the New-York Tribune.*  
THE POLITICAL PRESERVE.

We publish elsewhere a defense of the aspects and duties of the time, by one of our most distinguished statesmen and politicians, Robert Dale Owen. Unlike some of his countrymen, Mr. Owen does not deceive himself as to the nature of the civil war in which we are engaged. He takes no narrow or partisan view of the motives under which it should be conducted. He decries all of it which shall not be carried on in its truest.

Mr. Owen discerns, what long before long since discerned before, and many more are just beginning to discern, that the civilized existence of two orders of society, so different as those of the free and slave states, is incompatible with the peace of the continent. Whether in the Union or out of it, slavery can only produce a class of personal irritation and conflict, and a succession of hostilities or trace of any kind a mere postponement of a more decided outbreak. Enslavement is at once the street means of suppressing the rebellion; as an armed resistance to it hampering the sections as bodies politic.

His statements are clear, his argument cogent, his motives patriotic, and we ask for his presentation of the case the calm, upright, & considerate of men of all parties, and particularly of the democratic party to which the writer has all his life adhered.

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## THE COST OF LIBERTY.

*To the Hon. Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury:*

Mr. In briefest terms I state the propositions of Dr. S., as the subject of our recent conversation, I promised to reduce to writing.

What are the reasonable bonds of your war?

No, that within the next ten days the South, availing herself of the term of grace offered in the President's proclamation, may, to give her favorite institution, return to her allegiance. Let us not deceive ourselves. There are no conditions, no guarantees—no, not if we proffer her a blank sheet on which to set them down, with

unrestricted pen, in her own hand—nor is which she will consent to remain, except in one condition—her quiet, peace or less complete, by force or arms.

As we likely to find in the field corps? In case of an answer, let us look closely at it & satisfy ourselves.

By the census of 1860 the number of white males between the ages of 18 and 35 is, in the United States, about four millions; and, in the divided states, about one million three hundred thousand; a little over twice of three to one. The disproportion seems overwhelming great.

Let this statement, as a basis of military strength, be wholly ridiculous; for it includes persons of one color or age.

Out of the above four millions the North has to provide soldiers and (with inconsiderable exceptions, not usually extending to field labor) laborers.

Out of the three millions and a half of slaves owned in the rebel states about two millions may be deducted as laborers. About three hundred thousand of these are employed in domestic services and other occupations followed by women and children, and we have seventeen hundred thousand plantation hands, male and female, each one of which exerts against a Northern laborer on three or in violence.

Then of the portion of population whence soldiers and outdoor laborers and mechanics must chiefly be taken, the northern states have four millions and the southern states three millions.

Supposing the negroes all loyal to their masters, it follows that the true proportion of strength available in this war—that is, of soldiers to fight and laborers to support the nation while fighting—may fairly enough be taken at three in the South to four in the North.

Under this supposition of a South united, without regard to color, in an effort for recognition, shall we obtain peace by subduing her? If history teach truth, we shall not. Never, since the world began, did nine millions of people band together, resolutely inspired by the one idea of achieving their independence, yet fail to obtain it. It is not a century since one-third of the number successfully defied Great Britain.

But let us suppose the negroes of the South loyal to the Union instead of to their masters, how stands the matter then?

In that case, it is not to a united people, but to a Confederacy divided against itself, that we are opposed; the masters on one side; the laborers, exceeding them in number, on the other.

Suppose the services of these laborers transferred to us, what will then be the proportion, on either side, of forces available, directly and indirectly, for military purposes?

As it stands at the present time, for the two and a third: in the war to do, nearly nine to one.

Such a wholesale transfer, of course, impossible in practice. But in so far as the transfer is possible, and practicable, we approach the above result.

How much wider, under these circumstances, is the field of action that we should put down the rebellion and settle the negro question at the same time? What shall we say of their statesmanship who, in a war like this, would leave out civil and political effects of emancipation?

On the other hand, however, it is to be admitted that Africa's loyalty in this war will little avail us, if we have no good cause and good feeling enough properly to govern the negroes who may enter our lines.

For moral suasion available, in the first place we must treat them humanely; a duty we have performed; and secondly, both for their sakes and ours, we must not support them in idleness. But unless, they are most efficient as laborers, at home or in camp, as teamsters, or engineers, laborers in armaments and fortifications, or in the service of our supplies and mines; still less, if the plantations shall still be to carry on, as at present. But if all these possibilities are excluded, better do away with the negroes in our army, as in the North by putting them in the ranks of able-bodied men, colored drivers and mechanics, than to delude their ignorant souls by the opinion that among the privations they will find without work.

Have we got tact, policy and discretion enough wisely to induce it through a change of system? And, by "tact," I mean administrative capacity in public affairs, which is not our strong point. We would do well to learn from history, however, that without such capacity, not insularly, but our entire government experiment, will prove a failure at last.

The other objections held against the plan? Dash humanity forbids us to accept the aid of an enslaved race? In so far as humanity can never enjoin, or at all, that joins the employment, by us, of the African in this; first, because his employment may shorten, by years, the fratricidal struggle; and then, because, if he is not permitted to assist

in civilized warfare under us, and if, without his aid, we fail to effect his liberation and thus disappoint his hopes, he may be overtaken by the temptation to seek freedom and revenge in his own wild way. In accepting the liberated slave as a soldier we may prevent his rising as an assassin. By the creation of negro brigades we may avert the indiscriminate massacres of servile insurrection.

Or is there an insuperable difficulty of caste in the way? Is a contest likely to eventuate in securing to another race than ours the greatest of temporal blessings, are we determined to shut out that race from all share in its own liberation? Are we so encumbered of the Moloch, War, that we will suffer none but our sons to pass through the fire? Terrible penalty to pay, with life and death at stake, for a national prejudice against the southern Parish!

As to the duty of our rulers in the premises, cannot we according to what principle of ethics a government, charged with the lives of millions, the putting down of a gigantic rebellion and the restoring of tranquillity to the land, has the right in the hour of its utmost need, to scorn a vast element of strength placed within its reach and at its disposal; nor why, if it refuses to avail itself of such an element, it should not be held responsible for the lives it sacrifices and the hopes blighted.

But we need emancipation far less for the material aid it affords—great, even indispensable, though it be—than because of other paramount social motives.

We have tried the experiment of a federal Union, with a free-labor system in one portion of it and a slave system in another, for eighty years and no one familiar with our affairs for a quarter of a century will doubt that the result has been an increase—embittered year by year in every accelerated ratio—of dissensions, of sectional jealousies, of national heart-burnings. When eighteen months since, these culminated in war, it was but the issue which our ablest statesmen looking sorrowfully into the future, had foreseen and foretold. But if, while yet at peace and with all the influence of revolutionary reminiscences pleading the cause of Union, this diversity of labor systems, producing variance of character and alienation of feeling, proved stronger to divide than all past memories and present interests to unite, what chance is there that its baneful power for evil should cease, now, when thoughts of fancied injuries in other years are added the recollections of the terrible realities enacted on a hundred bloody battlefields, from which the smoke has scarcely passed away?

None—the remotest!

A suspension of hostilities we can procure for a few years' respite, probably, in which to return to our money-getting business, and to lay forth and withhold heavy contributions beyond self-interest and convenience. We are in our "fortuitous" ; the time is not far off, pending now, that the world may live and die in peace, and the result shall endear us to all. Let us then put off the evil day, and let the pregnant cause of the revolution be educated.

Report has it to do with the proposed, as the first step, the recognition of slaves as men, an idea he abhors. The idea of war, however, is inflicting labor systems that he carried over, and the progressive spirit of God does not go along with that. He is not openly on the side of the South, but he obeys its human law. There are a few slaves in commercial shipping, but he should not consider them. He is a moderate; he is a man of principle, but not of extreme. In the conditions of his life, he believes it would be wrong for the South were to force negroes emancipated, to give up their allegiance, religion, &c. For in the former case, a man being uprooted, the world over, had a few years made him a slave. While, in the latter, a man's creation still exists, it is not to be expected that he would not obey his master, with a barrel's load of gunpowder, a Conscript or union would be a good thing, but imagine southern slaves as free men, offering compensation, and exhausted with military service, after two years' enlistment, and then under the guise of protection, what next? Rebellion, or the like, in the shape of emancipation, across the border. A Foreign Power demanding their rights, while the North opposed the demand. Renewed war.

Or take, even, the case of the South, where the recognition of the right of self-government in slave-holding. As they were, there was no exception among them. We must either make ourselves all one nation, or submit to the system of a foreign nation, like the United States, to her negro refugees seeking refuge. And this

are paid for such losses under an equitable appraisalment. But it is not the existence of part of a city that is now endangered; it is the integrity of one among the first Powers of the world that is menaced with destruction.

The truth of the preamble suggested has become, in my judgment, incontrovertible. It will receive the assent of an overwhelming majority of the people of the loyal states. The public sentiment of Europe will admit its truth.

Let us confess that such a preamble, as preface to act or proclamation, could not have commanded the assent of more than a small fraction of our people, only two short years ago—two years, as we reckon time; a generation, if we calculate by the stirring events and far-reaching upheavals that have been crowded into the eventful months. In such days as these abuses ripen rapidly. Their consequences mature. Their ultimate tendencies become apparent. We are reminded of their transitory character. We are reminded that although for the time, and in a certain stage of human progress, some abuses may have their temporary use, and for this, under God's economy, may have been suffered to continue; yet all abuses have but a limited life. The Right only is eternal.

The rebellion, teacher and creator as well as scourge and destroyer, by sternly laying bare the imminent dangers of slavery, has created the constitutionality of emancipation. It has done more. It has made emancipation a bounden political duty, as well as a strictly constitutional right.

Can we, in declaring emancipation, legally avoid the payment, say of two hundred millions, in the shape of compensation to loyal slaveholders?

Not if a slaveholder's right to service and labor from his slaves, when not forfeited by treason, is legal. On humanitarian grounds the legality of that right has been denied. But a construction of the constitution adverse to such denial, and acquiesced in by the nation throughout more than two generations, is held by most men to be reason sufficient why the right in question should be regarded as private property. If it be private property, then, except by violating the fifth article of the amendments to the constitution, it cannot be taken for public use without just compensation. To violate any article of the constitution is a revolutionary act; but such acts cost a nation more than a few hundred millions of dollars.

The risk that a future decision of the Supreme Court might declare emancipation without compensation to be unconstitutional is, of itself, sufficient justification of the President's policy, corresponding to the above suggestions, in this matter.

Such compensation will be unpopular with many. Wise and just acts, when they involve sacrifices, frequently are. A wrong long tolerated commonly entails a penalty, which is seldom cheerfully paid. Yet, even on other grounds, we ought not, in this case, to beguile the money. Who deserve better of their country than those brave men who, in the border and other slave states, have clung to their loyalty through all the dark hours of peril even to life?

Precautions naturally suggest themselves against false pretences of loyalty. It seems expedient that he who shall have proved that he is the legal owner of certain slaves, and also that he has ever been loyal to the Union, should receive a certificate of indebtedness by the government, not transferable, to be paid at some fixed time subsequent to the termination of the war: payment being made contingent on the fact that the claimant shall not, meanwhile, have lapsed from his loyalty.

Every such claimant, once recognised, would feel himself to be, by his own act the citizen of a free state; one of us, detached forever from the southern league. A government stockholder, he would become peculiarly interested in the support of the government and the restoration of peace.

Even if the legislatures of the border states should not initiate such a policy, the loyal men of these states will accept it.

Such a measure does not involve expense in conveying the liberated negro to other countries. It has hitherto, indeed, been the usual policy in slave states to discourage, as dangerous, the residence there of free blacks; and hence an idea that colonization should be the concomitant of emancipation. Of general emancipation, there is no need whatever that it should be. Those who take up such an idea forget that the jealousy with which slaveholders regard the presence of free negroes springs out of the dread that these may infect with a desire for freedom the slaves around them, thus rendering them insubordinate. But when all are free there will be no slaves to incite, nor any chains to be broken by resort to insurrection.

It is no business of ours either to decide, for the liberated negro, where he shall dwell, or to furnish his travelling expenses. Freemen, black or white, should select their own dwelling place and pay their own way.

As to the fears of competition in labor sought to be excited in the minds of the northern working man, they have foundation only in case emancipation be refused; for such refusal would flood the North with fugitives. If, on the contrary,

emancipation be carried out, the strong local attachments of the negro will induce him, with rarest exceptions, to remain as a hired laborer where he worked as a slave. Thus humane masters will not lack sufficient working hands, of which colonization would deprive them. And if, notwithstanding the probable rise of southern staples, profits, at first, should be less, the security of the planter will be greater. He will no longer lie down at night uncertain whether the morning's news may not be that his slaves have risen against them.

This is the paner view of the question. But all edicts, all proclamations, how wise and righteous soever, are but idle announcements now, if we lack courage and conduct to enforce them.

Courage we have. Few lives have behaved like veterans. The skeletons of recipients reduced to one-tenth their original number, attest the desperate valor with which they confront death. Not with the rank and file is the blame! The leading! There has been the signal of failure.

With all the advantages of a just cause over our enemies, we have suffered them to outdo us in earnestness. We lack the enthusiasm which made irresistible the charge of Cromwell's Iron sides. We need the invincible impulse of a sentiment. We want, above all, leaders who know and feel what they are fighting for. This is a war in which mercenaries avail not. There must be a higher motive than the pay of a Swiss—a holier duty urging on, than the professional pride or the blind obedience of a soldier. By parliamentary usage a proposed measure is entrusted, for fostering care, to its friends. So should this war be. Its conduct should be confided to men whose hearts and souls are in it.

Again It has long been one of our national sins that we pass by, with scarcely a rebuke, the gravest public offenses. We utterly fail in holding to a strict accountability our public men. The result of such failure, in peace, had almost escaped our notice. In war we have now behold its effects, flagrant and terrible.

It was not to be expected that among so many thousands of officers suddenly appointed there should not be some hundreds of incompetents. Such things must be. No one is to blame if, in field or gaden, weeds spring up. The blight rests with him who leaves them there to choke the crop and cumber the ground.

Accountability—that should be the watchword—ACCOUNTABILITY, stern, unrelenting! Offire has its emoluments; let it have its responsibilities also. Let us demand, as Napoleon demanded, success from our leaders. The rule may work harshly. War needs harsh rules. Actions are

not to be measured in war by the standard of peace. The sentinel, worn by extreme fatigue, who sleeps at his post, incurs the penalty of death. There is mercy in courts-martial—drum-head courts-martial. A dozen officers shot, whenever the gravity of the offence demands it, may be the saving of life to tens of thousands of brave men.

Eighteen months have passed. Eight hundred millions have been spent. We have a million of armed men in the field. More than a hundred thousand rest in soldiers' graves. And for all this, what result? Is it strange if sometimes the heart sinks and resolution fails at the thought that, from sheer administrative infirmity, the vast sacrifice may have been all in vain?

But let the Past go! Its fatal faults, (difficult perhaps, to avoid, under an effort so sudden and so vast) can never be recalled. Doubtless they had their use. It needed the grievous incapacity we have witnessed, the stinging reverses we have suffered, the invasion even of free states we have failed to see commended; it needed the hecatombs of men piled up unavailingly on battle-field after battle-field—the desolate hearths, the broken-hearted survivors—it needed all this to pave the way for that emancipation which is the only harbinger of peace.

The Future! that is still ours to improve. Nor, if some clouds yet rest upon it, is it without bright promise. Signs of nascent activity, energy, and a resolution to hold accountable for the issue the leaders of our armies, are daily apparent. Better than all, the initiative in a true line of policy has been taken. The twenty third of September has had its effect. The path of safety is before us; steep and rugged, indeed, but no longer doubtful nor obscure. A lamp has been lit to guide our steps; a lamp that may burn more brightly before a new year dawns upon us. The noble prayer of Ajax has been vouchsafed in our case. At last we have light to fight by.

We shall reach a quiet haven if we but follow faithfully and perseveringly that guiding light.

There is, at this moment, in the hearts of all good men throughout the length and breadth of the land, no deeper feeling, no more earnest longing, than for peace; peace not for the day, not to last for a few years; but peace, on a foundation of rock, for ourselves and for our children after us. May the hearts of our rulers be opened to the conviction that they can purchase only a shambling counterfeit except at one cost! God give them to see, ere it be too late, that THE PRICE OF ENDURING PEACE IS GENERAL EMANCIPATION!

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

New York, November 10, 1862.

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